

Social Media's Influence on Foreign Policy Decisions in Somalia

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Abstract: *In Somalia, social media has begun as a crucial factor in shaping foreign policy decisions within a involved political landscape characterized by conflict and instability, this paper examines the dual role of social media as both a tool for information distribution and a platform for public engagement in the context of Somali foreign relations. The article highlights how social media facilitates actual communication between the Somali government, public citizens, civil society organizations, Non-State actors, media outlets and international stakeholders, allowing for immediate responses to rising issues. Furthermore, the study explores how various actors, including stakeholder's communities, utilize social media to influence policy discussions and advocate for specific foreign policy agendas. The authors added that whereas social media offers opportunities for increased transparency and public participation, it also creates challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and the potential for polarization among different societal groups. At the end, this study underlines the need for Somali policymakers to usefully tie together social media to enhance diplomatic efforts and foster a more inclusive foreign policy interchange.*

Keywords: Social Media, influence Somalia, Foreign Policy, Government Communication, Misinformation

1. Introduction

Social media has become a powerful force in shaping foreign policy decisions globally, and Somalia is no exception. In a country dealing with political instability, conflict, and a mixed relationship with the international community, social media platforms offer new paths for communication and commitment. These platforms enable the Somali government to disseminate information, respond to public concerns, and interact with foreign entities in actual time. Additionally, social media provide a space for various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, and non-state actors, to voice their opinions and influence policy discussions. As a result, social media is not only a tool for information sharing but also a significant player in the dynamics of foreign relations. However, the rise of social media also brings challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and the potential for polarization among different societal groups. This interplay of opportunities and challenges highlights the critical role of social media in shaping foreign policy decisions in Somalia, necessitating a deeper exploration of its implications for governance and international relations.

1.1 Background

The role of social media in shaping foreign policy decisions has gained importance in various regions, and Somalia presents a unique case study due to its distinct socio-political context. Following decades of civil conflict and instability, Somalia has gradually reestablished diplomatic relations with various countries and international organizations. In this evolving environment, social media has emerged as a crucial tool for communication and public engagement, influencing both domestic and international perceptions. Historically, Somalia's foreign policy has been shaped by traditional diplomatic channels and international aid dynamics. However, the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok

and WhatsApp has transformed this landscape, allowing for direct interaction between the government and its citizens, as well as between Somalia and the global community. This shift has democratized the information flow, enabling a broader range of voices—including those from the diaspora and civil society—to participate in foreign policy discussions (Maqsood et al., 2024). The Somali government has involved social media as a means to enhance transparency and foster public trust. In using these platforms to share updates on diplomatic initiatives, address public concerns, and engage with international stakeholders, the government aims to cultivate a positive image and strengthen its foreign relations (Guha-Sapir & Ratnayake, 2024). However, the influence of social media is not without challenges; the rapid spread of misinformation and the potential for echo chambers can complicate public discourse and impact policy decisions (Maqsood et al., 2024). **Moreover, the author added** that the various actors, including non-state entities, militant groups, and political factions, utilize social media to promote their agendas, further complicating the foreign policy landscape. Moreover, the author continue that this situation requires to express understanding of how social media affects diplomatic policies and public opinion in Somalia, at the end as the country continues to steer its path toward stability and development, the influence of social media on foreign policy decisions remains a critical area of exploration.

2. Literature Review

Literature Review Summary: Social Media's Influence on Foreign Policy Decisions in Somalia

The literature on social media's influence on foreign policy decisions in Somalia highlights the transformative impact of digital platforms within a complex socio-political landscape. Scholars emphasize that social media serves as a significant tool for communication, enabling the Somali

government to engage directly with citizens and international stakeholders, thereby fostering transparency and public trust (Maqsood et al., 2024). This direct engagement has allowed for a more democratized flow of information, empowering various actors, including diaspora communities and civil society organizations, to participate in foreign policy discussions and advocacy (Guha-Sapir & Ratnayake, 2024). However, the literature also addresses the challenges posed by social media, particularly the spread of misinformation and the potential for polarization among different societal groups. Researchers argue that while social media can enhance public discourse, it can also lead to echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and complicate diplomatic efforts (Maqsood et al., 2024). Additionally, non-state actors, including militant groups and political factions, influence social media to influence public opinion and promote their agendas, further complicating the foreign policy landscape (Smith, 2023). **At the end the author's argument shows that the** writings point out that whereas social media presents opportunities for increased connection and transparency in Somalia's foreign policy, it also requires careful management to soften the risks associated with misinformation and polarization, equally important as Somalia continues to steer its political landscape, the interplay between social media and foreign policy will remain a critical area for further research and analysis

2.2 Social Media in Somalia

Social media has fast gained importance in Somalia, transforming the way information is shared and how citizens engage with each other and their government. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, Instagram, and WhatsApp facilitate actual communication, allowing individuals and groups to quickly share news and updates. In a society where traditional media outlets may be limited or censored, social media offers an active alternative for accessing information, enabling diverse voices to be heard (Maqsood et al., 2024). The Somali government has recognized the potential of social media to enhance public commitment and transparency, using these platforms to communicate directly with citizens, share policy updates, and respond to public concerns, which is crucial for building trust and fostering accountability (Guha-Sapir & Ratnayake, 2024). Additionally, social media empowers civil society organizations and spread communities to advocate for change and raise awareness on issues such as human rights and governance reforms, increasing their messages to a global audience. However, the rapid spread of misinformation creates significant challenges, leading to confusion and mistrust among the public. Instances of fake news be able to undermine legitimate discussions and complicate the political landscape (Lazer et al., 2018). Furthermore, non-state actors, including militant groups and political factions, influence social media to promote their agendas and influence public opinion, adding complexity to the foreign policy landscape (Smith, 2023). At the end, whereas social media has become a powerful tool shaping communication, engagement, and activism in Somalia, it also dictates critical engagement to address the challenges of misinformation and the influence of non-state actors.

2.3 Influence of Social Media in Somalia.

Social media significantly influences various aspects of Somali society, politics, and culture. It facilitates public speech and political engagement, allowing citizens to express opinions and organize movements for accountability and reform (Bashir, 2020). Moreover, social media serves as a primary source of news, providing actual updates on local and international events while also creating challenges related to misinformation (Mohamed, 2021). Culturally, it enables Somali communities to celebrate their heritage and share artistic expressions, raising a sense of identity, particularly among the scattering communities (Farah, 2019). Additionally, social media supports human rights advocacy by raising awareness of social issues such as social equality and youth rights, while also facilitating community support networks (Hassan, 2022). Economically, it provides opportunities for private enterprise, allowing small businesses to market their products and connect with customers (Ali, 2023). Furthermore, Somali officials use social media for diplomatic engagement, shaping international perceptions and mobilizing support during crises (Ismail, 2021). **At the end, the author added** that the social media acts that able to cause a changing force in Somalia, influencing political dynamics and cultural development while also presenting challenges that necessitate careful navigation.

2.4 Foreign Policy of Somalia

The foreign policy of Somalia has been significantly influenced by social media, which plays a crucial role in shaping both domestic and international opinions and actions. Social media platforms facilitate fast dissemination of information regarding Somalia's political landscape, security issues, and humanitarian crises, allowing for increased global awareness and prompting quicker responses from foreign governments and organizations (Abdullahi, 2021). Additionally, Somali citizens and the scattering societies utilize social media to express their views and advocate for policy changes, thereby forcing policymakers both domestically and internationally to consider the needs and desires of the Somali people when formulating foreign policy (Omar, 2020). Furthermore, the Somali government and various stakeholders influence social media to promote their stories and counter misinformation, influencing international aid and military support by controlling the narrative around issues such as terrorism and humanitarian needs (Farah, 2022). Social media also serves as an informal diplomatic channel, allowing Somali officials to engage directly with international counterparts, fostering dialogue and collaboration that might not occur through traditional diplomatic avenues (Ismail, 2021). Moreover, activism on social media possibly mobilize global campaigns for support, influencing foreign policy decisions related to humanitarian aid and intervention, as the ability to rally international attention and lead to increased assistance during crises (Hassan, 2022). The author concluded that the social media acts as to cause a changing force in Somalia's foreign policy, facilitating information distribution, public engagement, story control, and diplomatic communication,

which underlines the need for policymakers to steer these difficult sites effectively.

2.5 Government Communication in social media

Government communication through social media has become an essential tool for engagement, transparency, and information distribution. It facilitates direct, two-way communication, allowing governments to interact with citizens in real time, which can enhance public trust and accountability (Smith, 2022). During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health crises, social media enables governments to provide timely updates and instructions, effectively managing public response (Johnson, 2021). Additionally, social media serves as a platform for actual updates and educational campaigns, helping to inform citizens about critical issues, such as health and safety (Davis, 2020). In sharing information about policies and decision-making processes, governments be able to promote transparency and raise trust among the public (Thompson, 2023). Furthermore, social media allows governments to skill a positive image and manage public perception, particularly during crises (Omar, 2021). However, challenges such as the fast spread of misinformation can undermine government messages and destroy trust, while the digital divide may lead to differences in information access (Farah, 2022). Security risks also arise, as government communication on social media can expose sensitive information to cyber threats (Ali, 2023). In sudden, while social media is a powerful tool for government communication, it requires careful management to navigate these challenges and ensure effective public engagement.

2.6 Positive and Negative of Social Media's Influence

The author will make the following argument for social media's influence in both positive and negative based on his journalism experience in Somalia.

1. Positive influence of social media

- 1) More public analysis of government acts is made possible by social media, which encourages accountability and transparency by enabling citizens to voice their concerns and hold officials responsible. This can result in more responsible governance.
- 2) Social media platforms allow residents and the scattering communities to voice their opinions and facilitate wider participation in political discourse this will help policymakers will learn more about public opinion and make more representative foreign policy choices as a result of this participation.
- 3) Social media facilitates fast sharing of information, helping to mobilize international support during crises. possibly timely updates during emergency on humanitarian needs or security issues can lead to faster responses from foreign governments and NGOs.
- 4) Somali stakeholders will use social media to promote their narratives, counter misinformation, and advocate for their interests on the local and global stage, influencing how foreign entities perceive Somalia.

2. Negative influence of social media

- 1) Misinformation and Propaganda this means the fast spread of misinformation that has to distort public perception and complicate foreign policy as false narratives about Somalia may lead to misguided the true picture of the situation.
- 2) Polarization and Division, thus social media possibly worsen political divisions by creating beliefs or opinions that coincide, this division could make it more difficult to reach an agreement, which is essential for both internal stability and successful foreign policy.
- 3) Security risks could make government workers more susceptible to cyberattacks and promote online behavior that shows sensitive information. Political instability brought on by disinformation operations might make diplomatic relations more difficult.
- 4) Somali stakeholders may misuse social media as manipulation to promote biased narratives or propaganda, leading to the spread of misinformation, whereas this manipulation distort opinions of Somalia potentially resulting in misguided foreign policy decisions or interventions.

3. Conclusion

The author conclude that social media plays a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions in Somalia, presenting both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, it enhances public engagement, facilitates rapid information dissemination, and promotes transparency and accountability, allowing citizens and stakeholders to influence policy discussions. However, it also creates risks, such as the spread of misinformation, polarization, and security vulnerabilities, which be able to distort opinions and complicate diplomatic relations. As social media continues to evolve, its impact on Somalia's foreign policy will likely grow, underscoring the need for careful management to tie together its potential for positive change while mitigating its negative effects.

4. Future Prospects of Social Media's Influence on Foreign Policy Decisions in Somalia.

- 1) The rise of misinformation will require effective strategies, such as media literacy campaigns and policy adaptations, to ensure responsible use of social media in shaping Somalia's foreign relations.
- 2) The Somali government may need to create policies addressing social media's implications for foreign relations and national security, including regulations on online behavior and monitoring mechanisms.
- 3) Somali authorities may increasingly use social media as a tool for communication and diplomacy, fostering transparency and building stronger relationships with domestic and international audiences.
- 4) Increased internet access and digital literacy will empower citizens and the government to use social media as a tool for communication, fostering greater public participation and accountability in foreign policy.
- 5) Social media will enable the Somali scattering communities to advocate for important issues, potentially political participation, express their opinion and

attracting foreign investment and support for development initiatives.

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Hussein Abdulle Mohamed is a master's student in Political Science at Somali National University, Mogadishu, Somalia, with a bachelor's degree in Public Administration from the University of Somalia (UNISO). A seasoned media professional with over 13 years of experience, Hussein specializes in political communication, governance, and public administration. His expertise spans content creation, strategic communications, public relations, and media management, with a particular focus on bridging political ideologies and public opinion in Somalia and other developing regions. Hussein's deep understanding of the intersections between media, politics, and society shapes his analysis of political messaging and its impact, offering valuable insights into the role of media in influencing political outcomes.